

SMOKE

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SMOKE

LAST PARTING

The lady stood at the dreamer's head;
Only in dreams could she reach him now.
"I am going away," the lady said.

He answered, forgetting a decade's vow:
"Where have you hidden yourself these years?
Your hair shines golden upon your brow.

How foolish our anguishes, our fears!"
She repeated: "I am going away.
Can you help me?" Her voice was veiled in tears.

—"I'll call a taxi; but won't you stay?
Do you leave by train? Do you leave by boat?"
—"No, no: I am leaving another way.

Where did I drop my hat and coat?
The night is short; I must leave tonight."
—"Why with one hand do you clutch your throat?

But one thing: promise me you will write."
—"Don't you remember that I am dead?
I am going away!" And her face went white.

S. FOSTER DAMON

SMOKE

ST. LOUIS BLUES

That tune never brought me anything but misery
With its low, gullah laughter;
It brought my feet wandering to the tavern-house,
And turned my eyes so plain upside-down,
I *had* to look up with them to the stars.

It mocked me, in the terrible night,
When I thought there must be ghosts around me,—
But I only found sleet! sleet!— beating at my face with more
force than my tears,—
And rain, pounding on the head I hadn't sense enough to cover
The whole world was a-moaning, the wind was howling around
corners at me,
Sharing my grief. Lord! I felt ashamed!
It seemed like I was the cause of all that worrying:

Now, everywhere I wander there's a saxophone luring
something more than plain darkness out of night;
There's a glitter and an edge to every laugh I hear,—
There's different kinds of rhythms mixing in the welter
of every tune — madder and madder —
Till I have to think of all I've lost, with the wild drums playing
More than sound beats around my head; my breath
catches. The band gets hot!
Part of the racket comes out of my throat —
Even if I am too choked to speak!
Keep on dancing! It won't stop!
The music's inside of me!

FRANK MERCHANT

MARKSMAN

Her hope had been her secret bird
Which soared above experience,
Singing a song that no one heard,
Seeking escape from all pretense.

Within its fragile wings she found
Sufficient strength to lift her high
Above the sordidness of ground
To sanctuary in the sky,

At last there came one she could love,
To whom she dared to show her bird;
But he, as if past skill to prove,
Took aim and killed it with a word.

W. H. GERRY

SMOKE

A NIGHT FOR RAIN

(from AESTAR)

Up three floors and through a curtain-lace
Sits an artist, painting triangles — coils,
Remembering a madonna hiding a harlot's face,
Dynamic form and static movements mean less to him
Than one pale hand in front of light.

Tea now, or after dark?
Its place is found in lonely evenings
With music creeping through the walls.
Perhaps he too is lonely and the staccato touch
Will sink itself in some sad song,
Forgotten. Perhaps he will sing its pleading verse
So out of place with angles and straight lines.

The artist paints a zip-zag stroke and asks,
"Now, is that lightning or a stairs?",
Leans back to feel a certain beauty in his mind
That finds no double in his life.

Why a skin so white . . . and fingers like small
 vesper tapers,
And this cloth of green's brightest silk
Hiding a body whose edges must diffuse
Any light that falls behind?

SMOKE

Come you to tempt my touch ,
Or break a youth's long illusion ,
With a beauty sure to make confusion
Of senses falling at a brink
And still, not falling ?

And must my cleared mind tell me
That you are not you ,
And this is something of myself I see ?

The slow music follows through the sounding walls.
Was there no first crash that later found itself
Fallen to this plaintive tune ?

The artist , feeling dampness in the air ,
Reaches for a slouch-hat and torn umbrella ,
Knowing that visions appear in wind-wet streets
No hand will ever draw .

R. WADE DLIET

VOLUPTATES APLANAE NECTAR ET AMBROSIA

A mouthful of fresh Air among my BEES
 The sweetest of all Birds, man ever sees.
 Brave — harmless Creatures, which do Always sing,
 Hymn hum! & Never bite; but sometimes sting
 Unchaste or Wanton ones, and Drunkards too;
 Von ihnen gute Leüt haben gut Rüh.
 That is to say, All those for them have Rest,
 Who truly may be call'd Good, Better, Best,
 Thou that art none of Such, The smallest Bee
 Here in my Garden is Convincing Thee
 Of thy Mis-doings, and we want no more.
 A thousand Witnesses! My Friend, Therefore
 Repent of all what's bad; Amend, and then
 A sure Reward will Crown the End. Amen!

FRANCIS DANIEL PASTORIUS

1651—1719

Francis Daniel Pastorius, the "Pennsylvania Pilgrim" of Whittier's poem, was the founder of Germantown, the author of the first formal protest against slavery in the United States and of the first encyclopedia in this country. Immensely learned, that book—"The Beehive"—written in seven languages, still remains unpublished. It shows Pastorius as a poet—perhaps the greatest of 17th century America. The above text has been taken from the facsimile in Learned's life of Pastorius, opp. p. 260, and checked with Pastorius' own copy of "The Beehive", p. 79, item 126, the chief differences being "Hym" and " & wanton".

SMOKE

SEED PODS

for Louise Damon

Where the small heads of violets
are shrunk to smaller skulls,
in meadows where the mind forgets
its bull fights and its bulls;

the dust of violet or rose
relinquishes its scent
and carries with it where it blows
a lessening remnant
of heresies in equipoise
and balanced argument
with which the mind would have refreshed
the flower's skeleton
but that it found itself enmeshed
in the web of oblivion.

Therefore when Gabriel sound the horn
and dust rise through the ground,
our flesh shall turn, on our last morn,
fleshless as the horn's sound.

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

SMOKE

TOWARD SPRING

When I beget a son and charge
The rhythm of a night with mine
And hers who bears, then earth itself
Be under us to render sign.

Midsummer night when the long grass
Takes the slow measure of the wind,
Then will the flesh intent with flesh
Beat its hard cadence on the mind.

Dark land shall lie with us that night,
Rich with the harvest it must yield,
While the swift nostrils teach to veins
Air that is blown through clovered field.

So when the Autumn burns the moon
To copper over gathered corn,
That time when geese fly down the dusk,
In the stirred womb he shall be borne.

At last when the wild flame is done
And brown leaves by the sharp wind whipped,
He shall be carried in lean days
When fundamental earth is stripped.

SMOKE

And down the stark and pungent air
Which crowds the heart that bids him grow.
Must drum some heritage of truth
In utter nakedness of snow.

Until, even as the weighted world
Moves steadily upon its flood,
Through the great caverns, culminate,
Will swell resistless tides of blood.

When I beget a son and mix
The language of the soil with mine
And hers who bears, then earth itself
Lie under us to render sign.

WINFIELD SCOTT

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By W. H. Gerry